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NSC FOR ABRAMS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: EGYPT: KEY RULING PARTY FIGURE HEADING TO WASHINGTON

Classified by DCM Stuart Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: During a March 9 meeting, ruling party operative and Gamal Mubarak confidante Mohammed Kamal told the DCM he hoped to convince his American interlocutors during his upcoming trip to Washington that political reform in Egypt is not on the backburner. He claimed that preparations for an ambitious set of constitutional and legal reforms were well underway. The DCM asked if the NDP and Parliament would accept technical support to speed political reform goals. Kamal welcomed the offer, but cautioned that meaningful political reform would not be achieved "overnight." The DCM suggested that the NDP draw up a timetable outlining its political reform goals. Kamal is a worthy interlocutor but inclined to "spin" western audiences. We recommend USG interlocutors to press him on specifics, with the expectation that he will faithfully report his meetings to the President's son. End summary.

12. (C) The DCM met on March 9 with Mohammed Kamal, a Gamal Mubarak advisor and key player in the ruling NDP, on the eve of his departure for Washington. The media-savvy Kamal served as spokesman for Hosni Mubarak's presidential campaign. Ostensibly traveling for an academic conference, Kamal has arranged, through the Egyptian Embassy, a busy schedule of office calls at State and the NSC, on Capitol Hill, with IRI and NDI, and with think tanks including AEI, CSIS, and MEI.

13. (C) DCM cautioned that Kamal would find among the Egypt policy community in Washington disappointment with the state of Egypt's political reform process. The sense in Washington is that economic reform is moving forward but political reform is stalled.

14. (C) Kamal allowed that Egypt needed to do a better job of explaining the status of political reform in Egypt which he insisted is not on the back burner. The ruling party and the government have been convening groups of experts to discuss and formulate reforms to 20-25 articles in the constitution. Constitutional reforms under study would restructure Egypt's political system, redistributing powers allocated to the legislative, the executive, and the judiciary, he stated. Laws governing the status of women, media freedom, and the criminal justice system are likely to be revamped and there is serious discussion on new legislation for municipal governance. But multiple constitutional amendments and legal reforms could not be devised and implemented overnight Kamal explained.

15. (C) For example, echoing earlier statements by People's Assembly Speaker Fathy Surour, Kamal said the consensus view within the GOE was that certain provisions of Egypt's constitution would have to be amended before an anti-terror law "that has teeth" could be implemented. The practical implication is that the GOE has tentatively decided that the Emergency Law will have to be extended again before it expires at the end of May. This, however, would be the last extension, Kamal said, and it would be shorter than the last three-year extension.

16. (C) DCM queried if the GOE or the NDP were prepared to accept U.S. technical assistance to achieve these goals. IRI and NDI have now set up full-time offices in Cairo and could also be helpful, especially to NDP. Kamal expressed interest but noted Egyptian sensitivities about taking political help directly from the Americans. He asked how the assistance could be delivered and wondered if an Egyptian NGO could serve as middle man. He was also curious if the USG had successfully delivered on these programs elsewhere in the Middle East.

17. (C) The DCM urged Kamal to draw up a timetable to lock the party into a phased plan and assure outsiders that there was a process underway. Kamal agreed that an explanatory time table would be useful, but certainly wasn't possible for this trip to DC.

18. (C) Comment: Kamal is a worthy interlocutor who can shed much light on thinking within Gamal Mubarak's NDP "reform

camp." In the past three years he has gone from being a relatively obscure academic to one of the NDP's most prominent figures and its primary spokesman. Kamal talks a good game and is adept at "spinning" western audiences. We encourage USG interlocutors to press him for a timetable and more details on how the GOE intends to open the political system, with the expectation that he will faithfully report his meetings to Mubarak's son. End comment.
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